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The Paulsen Doctrine And Life With the CIA

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ANYTIME A MAN runs for President of the United States, the effort should yield something lasting, some lesson or truth in all the campaign speeches and slogans spewed out over the electorate. When Pat Paulsen ran for the Democratic presidential nomination in the winter of 1971-72, he gave to the New Hampshire electorate the doctrine that underlies the way this country runs, the Central Intelligence Agency.

He may not have known it, but Pat Paulsen, serious comedian and funny politician, provided a reconciliation of philosophies that ranks with the work of Thomas Aquinas. He explained how it is that a democracy—a government of, by and for the People—can have a secret government agency whose size, cost and activities are unknown to the people who pay for it and in whose name it acts.

Paulsen had a flair for pointing out the absurdness of serious matters and the seriousness of absurdities, allowing and encouraging his listeners to examine the two together without for a moment confusing which was which. The Paulsen Doctrine came in a stock campaign speech he deadpanned to audiences of young people newly enfranchised by the 26th Amendment. It went something like this: "I feel very secure and comfortable being an American, because in America any boy can grow up to be President. It's not so much that you'd *want* to. It's just knowing that you could."

It was a good line. Because here was Paulsen, a most improbable candidate, running for President. Everyone knew that he didn't stand a chance of carrying a New Hampshire township, let alone the election.

And it was a good line because Richard Nixon *had* grown up to become President. In retrospect, it seems an even better line because we now know that in the same primary election campaign in which Paulsen was giving that speech, Richard Nixon's dirty tricksters were plotting to put in the fix so that for four more years only their boy could be President.

But mostly it was a good line because that concept—"It's not so much that you'd want to, it's just knowing that you could"—underscores a major irony of our democracy: too much hinges upon the necessity that people *not* exercise their prerogatives. Nowhere in government is this forbearance more evident, and nowhere does democracy intrude less, than in the secret activities of the CIA.

Auditing in the Dark

THE VERY EXISTENCE of secret intelligence operations depends upon noncompliance with the constitutional stricture requiring that ". . . a regular Statement and Account of the Receipts and Expenditures of all public Money shall be published from time to time."

Virtually all of the highly classified activities of the CIA are overseen at one level or another through the Paulsen Doctrine. Those responsible are satisfied knowing that they *could* find out what's going on, so they don't bother actually to find out. The people, the Congress, the White House, the supervisory boards and committees, the high and mid-level officials, the auditors and inspectors, and the managers don't seem to want to know any more about the government's deep, dark secrets than is absolutely necessary. But everyone in a responsible position insists upon being told that they *could* find out, if they had a "need to know."

CIA internal auditors can hardly be expected to review signed receipts for bribes to members of a foreign parliament. Who would sign their true name to a receipt for a bribe? Auditors can't ask foreign politicos to certify that they are on the take from the CIA and to verify which votes they sold for how much. Suppose the bribes go through many intermediaries? Suppose the person being bribed doesn't even know it is the CIA bribing him? It's just expected and hoped and certified that the bribes find their way into the right pockets.

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